

to select the beginning date of eligibility from any date between the effective rating of the veteran's total and permanent service-connected disability and the date on which the Secretary determines that the veteran died of a service-connected disability. The amendment would restore the delimiting date provision, making the DEA program more uniform with other VA educational programs.

New section 201 would remove the arbitrary 30-year limit for manifestation of Agent Orange-related respiratory cancers in Vietnam veterans. Currently, title 38, United States Code, only provides a presumption in Vietnam veterans for respiratory cancer if the disease manifested within 30 years of their service in Vietnam. The most recent National Academy of Sciences report confirmed that there is no scientific basis for assuming that cancers linked to dioxin exposure would occur with a specific window of time. This provision would eliminate the 30-year limit and allow future claims for Vietnam veterans' respiratory cancers, irrespective of the date of manifestation of the disease.

Finally, new section 203 would restore the presumption of disability for pension purposes by allowing VA to accept certain types of evidence, beyond just medical evidence, to establish permanent and total disability. VA non-service-connected pension is a needs-based monthly benefit paid to certain disabled wartime veterans.

Currently, the VA must determine if medical evidence demonstrates that the veteran can be rated as permanently and totally disabled. This can be a very time-consuming process that creates hardships for pension claimants. This provision would allow VA to consider a veteran to be permanently and totally disabled for pension purposes if the veteran is a patient in a nursing home, the Social Security Administration has determined that the veteran is disabled for their benefit programs, or the veteran is age 65 or over. This provision should streamline the processing of pension claims and provide faster service for disabled and elderly veterans.

In conclusion, I urge my colleagues to support these vital enhancements to veterans benefits. As has been the case in previous years and is particularly important in light of our country's current military actions, this truly represents a bipartisan commitment to our Nation's veterans.

I ask unanimous consent that a summary of S. 1088 be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

SUMMARY OF S. 1088, AS AMENDED BY
MANAGER'S AMENDMENT
EDUCATION:

Increase the rate of the basic benefit of the Montgomery G.I. Bill (MGIB) from the cur-

rent \$650 per month to \$700 per month beginning in October 1, 2001; \$800 per month in October 1, 2002; and \$950 per month in October 1, 2003.

Allows MGIB participants to receive their otherwise monthly payment as an accelerated lump-sum payment for the month in which the course begins.

Currently, MGIB benefits are paid in monthly installments. S. 1088 would create flexibility in the payment method for MGIB to partially pay for short-term/high tech courses. It would accelerate payment of up to 60 percent of the cost of an approved program that leads to employment in a high technology industry.

Preserves educational benefits for those that must leave their course of study to serve on active duty in support of the National Emergency declared in response to the events of September 11, 2001.

Increase Dependent's Educational Allowance (DEA) for dependents and eligible spouses of veterans for full-time students is to \$690 from \$588 on November 1, 2002.

COMPENSATION AND PENSION

Removes the arbitrary 30-year limit for manifestation of Agent Orange-related respiratory cancers in Vietnam veterans. The most recent National Academy of Sciences report confirmed that there is no scientific basis for assuming that cancers linked to dioxin exposure would occur with a specific window of time.

Tasks the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to continue reviewing scientific evidence on effects on dioxin or herbicide exposure for 10 more years (five reports); and extends authority of the VA Secretary to presume service connection for additional diseases as based on future NAS reports for 10 more years.

Expands the compensation definition of "undiagnosed illness" for Gulf War veterans by adding poorly defined chronic multisymptom illnesses of unknown etiology, regardless of diagnosis. Congress provided compensation to these veterans disabled by "undiagnosed" illnesses. Since then many have received diagnoses for chronic conditions whose causes cannot be identified conclusively, but which preclude them from eligibility for benefits under the current law.

Streamlines VA pension eligibility and income reporting requirements.

HOUSING

Increases the home loan guaranty amount to \$63,175 from the current \$50,750, to keep pace with FHA loan guaranties supporting a loan of up to \$252,700. The VA guaranty amount has not been increased since 1994.

Extends the Native American veterans housing loan program, set to expire in 2002, by four years. Special authority is necessary, in addition to the general VA home loan guaranty, because these homes sit on tribal land. This makes traditional foreclosure and resale by the mortgage holders impossible.

Extends the four years the authority for housing loan guaranties for members of the Selected Reserve (now set to expire in 2007). Reservists must serve six years in order to become eligible for a VA-guaranteed loan. In order for the home loan to be advertised as a recruiting incentive now, the benefit must be authorized beyond six years

BURIAL MATTERS

Increases VA burial benefits for service-connected deaths of veterans from \$1,500 to \$2,000.

Authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish bronze markers for already marked graves in order to more permanently

commemorate the veteran's military service. VA is currently restricted by statute from providing a headstone or marker for already marked graves.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent the Rockefeller-Specter substitute amendment at the desk be agreed to; the committee-reported substitute amendment be agreed to, as amended; the bill be read the third time; that the Veterans' Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1291; that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that all after the enacting clause be stricken; that the text of S. 1088, as amended, be inserted in lieu thereof; that the bill be read a third time and passed; that the title amendment be agreed to, which I now send to the desk; that S. 1088 be returned to the calendar; and any statements be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 2462) was agreed to.

The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended, was agreed to.

The bill (H.R. 1291), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

(The bill will be printed in a future edition of the RECORD.)

The amendment (No. 2463) was agreed to, as follows:

Amend the title so as the read: "A Bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to modify and improve authorities relating to education benefits, compensation and pension benefits, housing benefits, burial benefits, and vocational rehabilitation benefits for veterans, to modify certain authorities relating to the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, and for other purposes.".

MEASURE READ FOR THE FIRST
TIME—S. 1786

Mr. REID. I understand S. 1786 introduced earlier today by Senator DURBIN is at the desk, and I ask for its first reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1786) to expand aviation capacity in the Chicago area.

Mr. REID. I ask for its second reading, and I object to my own request on behalf of the minority.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The bill will be read the second time on the next legislative day.

MEASURE READ THE FIRST
TIME—S. 1789

Mr. REID. I understand S. 1789, introduced earlier today by Senator DODD, is at the desk, and I ask for its first reading.